

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 AID-20 EB-11 CIEP-02 TRSE-00

STR-08 OMB-01 CEA-02 SAJ-01 COME-00 FRB-02 XMB-07

OPIC-12 LAB-06 SIL-01 FEA-02 DRC-01 /202 W

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R 151849Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7587

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY OSLO

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PARIS 6601

E.O. 11652: GDS

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TAGS: PFOR, PINT, FR

SUBJECT: FRANCE'S NEO-GAULLIST POLICY

SUMMARY. MORE THAN EVER BEFORE IN MODERN FRENCH HISTORY, POWER IS CONCENTRATED IN THE HANDS OF THE PRESIDENT. FOR GEORGES POMPIDOU, TIME MAY BE RUNNING OUT. HIS TWIN GOALS OF MAKING FRANCE INTO THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL POWER OF THE WORLD (AHEAD OF THE FRG) AND GUIDING THE EC INTO A DYNAMIC, INDEPENDENT CONFEDERAL EUROPE UNDER FRENCH LEADERSHIP HAVE NOT BEEN MET. THREATS ARE SEEN AS COMING FROM THE US, WHOSE ECONOMIC POLICIES POMPIDOU INCREASINGLY BELIEVES RUN COUNTER TO FRENCH GOALS, AND FROM A DOMESTIC SITUATION MARKED BY POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. THESE DIFFICULTIES ARE COMPOUNDED BY POMPIDOU'S ILL HEALTH AND IN PARTICULAR BY A DEEP CONCERN THAT FRANCOIS MITTERRAND MIGHT SUCCEED HIM. RECENT FRENCH BEHAVIOR, AND THE NOTABLY STRIDENT NEO-GAULLIST RHETORIC, IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THESE PROBLEMS AND FRUSTRATIONS. POMPIDOU'S APPEAL TO GALLISM IS DESIGNED TO HELP UNITE FRANCE BEHIND HIM, BUT IT CAN ONLY CAUSE CONTINUED TROUBLE FOR FRANCE'S ALLIES. END SUMMARY.

2. FOREIGN AFFAIRS. FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY HAS REMAINED FAITHFUL TO FUNDAMENTAL GAULLIST PRINCIPLES THROUGHOUT THE FIFTH REPUBLIC. ONLY ITS TONE AND STYLE HAVE VARIED. THIS POLICY SOUGHT TO MAXIMIZE FRANCE'S POWER, TO MAINTAIN FRANCE'S POLITICAL DOMINANCE OVER GERMANY AND TO COUNTER WHAT DE GAULLE SAW AS AN ATTEMPT BY THE US AND THE USSR TO DOMINATE EUROPE. IT SOUGHT TO UNITE EUROPE UNDER FRENCH LEADERSHIP TO ENABLE FRANCE TO FURTHER ITS OWN NATIONAL INTERESTS THROUGH AN EXPANDED ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL BASE. BEGINNING IN 1968 AND CONTINUING AFTER THE GENERAL'S DEPARTURE, THE HARSH TONE OF FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY WAS MUTED. RECENT AMERICAN POLICY INITIATIVES, E.G. THE PROPOSAL FOR A NEW ATLANTIC CHARTER, MIDDLE EAST POLICY SINCE THE OCTOBER WAR AND THE WASHINGTON ENERGY CONFERENCE, HAVE PROVOKED A RECRUDESCENCE OF HARSH GAULLIST RHETORIC PARTLY IN ORDER TO COUNTER WHAT

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PRESIDENT POMPIDOU SEES AS AN AMERICAN ATTEMPT TO DICTATE TO FRANCE AND TO EUROPE. MOREOVER, POMPIDOU SEES AMERICAN ECONOMIC POLICY AS AFFECTING FRANCE'S PROSPECTS FOR CONTINUED EXPORTS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH. HE SEES AMERICAN TECHNICAL OR COMMERCIAL SUCCESSES (E.G. THE SUMED CONTRACT, AIRCRAFT SALES, OR THE AEC NUCLEAR ENRICHMENT SALES PROGRAM) AS EXAMPLES OF OFFICIALLY-SPONSORED AMERICAN ATTACKS ON VITAL FRENCH

INTERESTS. HE SEEMS GENUINELY TO BELIEVE THE US IS ATTEMPTING TO ASSERT ITS HEGEMONY OVER EUROPE, PARTICULARLY IN TRADE AND INTERNATIONAL FINANCE. HE APPEARS TO BELIEVE THAT THE US IS DELIBERATELY MANIPULATING THE DOLLAR'S EXCHANGE RATE, THEREBY HINDERING FRANCE'S ABILITY TO PURSUE ITS NATIONAL ECONOMIC GOALS.

3. DOMESTIC MATTERS. FRENCH INTRANSIGENCE IS PRESENTED TO THE PUBLIC AS A VIRTUE, AS PRIME MINISTER MESSMER DEMONSTRATED STRIKINGLY A PROPOS THE WEC: "WHEN I SEE FRANCE ALONE, I FEEL YOUNG AGAIN, I THINK OF THE DAYS OF GENERAL DE GAULLE." THE EVOCATION OF NATIONALIST FEELING RESULTS FROM ATTEMPTS BY POMPIDOU AND THE GOF TO SOLVE PRESSING DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. AFTER A LONG PERIOD OF REMARKABLE GROWTH, INFLATION AND THE ENERGY CRISIS NOW THREATEN THE ECONOMY. (THE JANUARY RETAIL PRICE INDEX WAS UP 1.7 PERCENT). INFLATION IS ERODING REAL WAGES, AND THIS, COUPLED WITH RISING UNEMPLOYMENT, HAS INCREASED SOCIAL DISCONTENT. A DECLINE IN GOVERNMENTAL COHESION AND A LOSS OF POLITICAL DYNAMISM HAVE ACCOMPANIED THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. THE APRIL 1972 REFERENDUM ON EUROPE, THE CONDUCT OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE MARCH 1973 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS AND THE FAILURE LAST FALL TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION SHORTENING THE PRESIDENTIAL TERM ARE ALL EXAMPLES OF A DECLINE IN GOF POLITICAL ACUMEN. EVEN WHEN LUCK OR GOVERNMENT ACTION HAS RESULTED IN POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS (E.G. A SOLUTION TO THE "LIP" AFFAIR), THE GOF HAS LOOKED DISUNITED AND WEAK. POLITICAL SCANDALS (E.G. THE CANARD ENCHAINE AFFAIR) HAVE ALSO HAD A DEBILITATING EFFECT.

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4. PARTY PROBLEMS. POMPIDOU HAS DIFFICULTIES IN MAIN-
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TAINING LEADERSHIP OVER THE GAULLIST POLITICAL MOVE-
MENT, THE UDR, WHICH FACES A CRITICAL CHOICE OVER
WHETHER IT CAN, IN THE POST-DE GAULLE ERA, REMAIN A
MASS MOVEMENT OF ALL CLASSES, OR WHETHER IT WILL BECOME
JUST ANOTHER POLITICAL PARTY, PROBABLY OF THE RIGHT AND
PROBABLY ONLY AFTER A DAMAGING AND WEAKENING SPLIT.
POMPIDOU HAS NEVER ENJOYED DE GAULLE'S ABSOLUTE CONTROL
OVER THE UDR. IN NOVEMBER, IT SELECTED FORMER PRIME
MINISTER CHABAN-DELMAS (WHOM POMPIDOU FIRED AS PRIME
MINISTER AND WITH WHOM HE GETS ALONG BADLY) AS ITS
STANDARD BEARER. POMPIDOU'S CONCERNS ABOUT THE UDR ARE
CLEAR FROM GESTURES HE HAS RECENTLY MADE TO SEVERAL
LEADING GAULLIST "BARONS", APPOINTING THEM TO PRESTI-
GIOUS POSITIONS. THE NEO-GAULLIST FOREIGN POLICY LINE IS
ALSO USEFUL IN THIS EFFORT TO SHORE UP AND REASSERT
CONTROL OVER THE UDR -- AS RECENT LAUDATORY EDITORIALS
IN THE PARTY ORGAN ATTEST.

5. PRESIDENTIAL HEALTH. FINALLY, THERE IS POMPIDOU'S HEALTH. IT IS NOW GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT POMPIDOU IS SERIOUSLY ILL (ALTHOUGH SINCE THE NATURE OF HIS ILLNESS IS NOT KNOWN, NO PROGNOSIS CAN BE MADE). HE MIGHT WELL BE OBLIGED TO RESIGN BEFORE HIS TERM EXPIRES IN JUNE 1976. THE ABSENCE OF A CONVINCING EXPLANATION FROM THE ELYSEE OF HIS ILLNESS HAS CAUSED PUBLIC CONCERN AND CONTRIBUTED TO THE IMPRESSION THAT POMPIDOU IS WEAK AND RITED AND THAT HIS GOVERNMENT IS DRIFTING, NO LONGER MASTER OF EVENTS.

6. THE MINISTERIAL SHAKEUP. TO MOST POLITICAL OBSERVERS, THE RECENT MINISTERIAL SHAKEUP IS EXEMPLARY OF BOTH GOF FAILINGS AND OF ITS GOVERNING STYLE. POMPIDOU OBLIGED HIS GOVERNMENT DRAMATICALLY TO RESIGN, THEN RENAMED MOST OF THE OLD MINISTERS TO THEIR FORMER FUNCTIONS IN A SMALLER GOVERNMENT CONTAINING NOT ONE NEW FACE. MANY FRENCHMEN ARE SCORNFUL OF A PRIME MINISTER WHO UNDERLINES HIS SUBORDINATION TO THE PRESIDENT AND WHO STATES THAT STYLE, NOT POLICY, WOULD CHANGE IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT, COUPLING THIS WITH A SUGGESTION THAT IT MERITED MORE CONFIDENCE THAN ITS PREDECESSOR.

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7. POMPIDOU'S RESPONSE. POMPIDOU IS CLEARLY AWARE OF HIS CURRENT DIFFICULTIES. THE PACKAGE OF MEASURES RECENTLY TAKEN IN THE ENERGY FIELD IS DESIGNED NOT JUST TO SOLVE CONCRETE PROBLEMS. IT ALSO REPRESENTS AN ATTEMPT TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF DYNAMIC, STRONG, COHERENT LEADERSHIP. POMPIDOU'S STATEMENT TO HIS "NEW" CABINET AND THE NATION THAT HE WOULD NOT TOLERATE MINISTERIAL BACKBITING AND THE CALL FOR UNITY WITH THE GOVERNING COALITION INDICATE HIS ATTEMPTS TO PRODUCE GOVERNMENTAL COHESION AND DRIVE. POMPIDOU IS EVIDENTLY TRYING TO RECOVER THE POLITICAL INITIATIVE, TO DICTATE THE PACE OF EVENTS.

8. THE FUTURE. POMPIDOU'S FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM REMAINS THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN 1976. HE ALMOST CERTAINLY WILL NOT RUN AGAIN, EVEN THOUGH HE SAYS HE WILL. CANDIDATES FROM AMONG THE MAJORITY PARTIES ARE NUMEROUS. POMPIDOU HAS DELIBERATELY AVOIDED NAMING "DAUPHIN" AND WILL NOT DO SO FOR SOME TIME, UNLESS DETERIORATING HEALTH FORCES HIS HAND. NAMING A POLITICAL HEIR WOULD MAKE HIM A LAME DUCK AND HEIGHTEN SPECULATION THAT HIS HEALTH COULD CAUSE HIM TO RESIGN AND ADVANCE THE DATE FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. HE DISLIKES CHABAN-DELMAS, AND IS SAID TO HAVE DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER THE CONSERVATIVE, NON-GAULLIST GISCARD COULD

BEAT MITTERRAND. HE ALSO HAS A CONGENITAL RELUCTANCE TO TAKE DECISIONS. IN THE INTERVAL, CHABAN, GISCARD AND OTHER HOPEFULS IN THE MAJORITY PARTIES WILL JOCKEY FOR POSITION, A PROCESS UNLIKELY TO IMPROVE COHESION AMONG THE GOVERNING PARTIES, DESPITE POMPIDOU'S HOPES.

9. THE SOCIALIST PROBLEM. POMPIDOU'S PROBLEMS ARE COMPOUNDED BY THE FACT THAT THE MAN HE CHOOSES AS HIS SUCCESSOR IS BY NO MEANS ASSURED OF WINNING THE ELECTION. THE LEFT OPPOSITION IS SHOWING NEW SYNAMISM, MODERATION AND UNITY. UNDER FRANCOIS MITTERRAND, THE SOCIALISTS HAVE FORGED A NEW AND SO FAR SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL ALLIANCE WITH THE COMMUNISTS. MITTERRAND HAS DISPLAYED REMARKABLE POLITICAL SKILL IN THE LAST YEAR, PORTRAYING HIMSELF AS A MAN WHO, ONCE ELECTED PRESIDENT, WOULD PROVIDE NON-REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE WHILE KEEPING THE CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMUNISTS UNDER CONTROL. HIS CHANCES OF WINNING THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTONS HAVE BEEN STEADILY RISING, ALTHOUGH IT WOULD BE RASH TO PREDICT NOW A MITTERRAND VICTORY. POMPIDOU WANTS AT ALL COSTS TO KEEP MITTERRAND OUT OF THE ELYSEE, NOT ONLY BECAUSE HE DEEPLY DISTRUSTS HIM AND DOUBTS HIS CAPACITY TO KEEP THE COMMUNISTS IN CHECK, BUT ALSO TO AVOID THE CERTAIN CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS THAT WOULD ENSUE. IN SEARCHING FOR ISSUES TO SECURE THIS RESULT, AN EVOCATION OF THE NATIONALIST SPIRIT, AS EXEMPLIFIED BY DE GAULLE, IS MOST USEFUL. HE HOPES THE THEME WILL INDUCE A SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE AND COOPERATION AMONG THE FRENCH. AS ELECTIONS NEAR AND IF THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION AND POMPIDOU'S HEALTH WORSEN, IT IS LIKELY THAT APPEALS BY THE GOVERNMENT TO THIS SPIRIT OF NATIONALISM WILL INCREASE. IT WILL ALL TEND TO MAKE FRANCE AN EVEN MORE PRICKLY PARTNER FOR ITS ALLIES THAN IS NOW THE CASE.STONE

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